

HOUSE RESOLUTION 240  
By Cooper B

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of John L. Smith of  
Memphis.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of John L. Smith; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Smith was an exemplary Tennessean and consummate professional who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, for 31 years, Mr. Smith served with acumen and alacrity as a bus driver for the Memphis Area Transit Authority, in which position he earned the respect of his peers and passengers alike for the exemplary quality of his work; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Smith was known in Shelby County as the "Jackie Robinson" of his profession, as he broke the color barrier in the Transit Authority when he joined it in 1961; of more than 430 drivers on staff at that time, he was the only African-American; and

WHEREAS, this pioneer served as an inspiration to his community, as many passengers would allow numerous other buses to pass as they awaited the privilege of riding on John Smith's coach; and

WHEREAS, his skill and professionalism did much to teach the citizens of Memphis that people should be judged by their character alone; and

WHEREAS, during his early years as a driver, Mr. Smith's job was not always easy, but he was always able to press on by drawing from his experiences growing up in a particularly rough section of south Memphis that taught him at an early age how to overcome adversity; and

WHEREAS, on his final route before taking a well-deserved retirement in 1992, Mr. Smith drove the same route that he had driven at the beginning of his career, a path upon which he touched countless lives during his tenure; and

WHEREAS, his singular position in history was honored by Citizens for Better Service with a special tribute award at the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Program; and

WHEREAS, his professional accomplishments aside, John Smith was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Smith treasured the loving companionship of the late Mrs. Jimmie Ruth Smith before her untimely passing, and he was the proud father of four daughters, Carol Jean Smith Edward, Sheila Smith, Debra Smith, and Jennifer Smith; and

WHEREAS, he will also be dearly missed by his grandchildren and a host of relatives and friends; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Smith leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor the memory of John L. Smith, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character, his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction, and his leadership in improving the quality of life for the citizens of Memphis.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Smith.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy